

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, PLO
SUBJECT: SYRO-PALESTINIAN MANEUVERINGS PERSIST AS PLO CENTRAL
COUNCIL AND NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS APPROACH

1. SUMMARY: SYRIA CONTINUING ATTEMPTS INCREASE ITS
INFLUENCE WITHIN PLO. EFFORTS CURRENTLY BEING BACKED TO
EXPAND PNC BY ADDITION MORE "INDEPENDENTS" WHO SYRIANS HOPE
WILL DILUTE LEADERSHIP OF ARAFAT AND HIS CLOSE SUPPORTERS.
ON POLICY MATTERS, SARG HAS SIGNALLED ITS SUPPORT FOR PLO
RECONCILIATION WITH JORDAN AND FORMATION JOINT POLITICAL COMMAND
AMONG IT AND CONFRONTATION STATES. SADAT PROPOSAL FOR EVENTUAL
PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN CONFEDERATION IGNORED HERE, BUT MEDIA
COVERAGE DEBATE OVER FORMATION PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT INDICATES SARG KEEPING ITS OPTIONS OPEN. PLO "MODERATES" GIVEN
WARNING TO BRING "REJECTIONISTS" UNDER CONTROL OR FACE
PROSPECT FURTHER SYRIAN MILITARY PRESSURE. OVERALL,
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SARG MANEUVERING TO INSURE PLO FOLLOWS POLICIES OF
CONFRONTATION STATES AND, MORE PARTICULARLY, SYRIA ON
MAJOR POLICY QUESTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AS TIME FOR SCHEDULED FEBRUARY PALESTINE NATIONAL
COUNCIL MEETING DRAWS NEARER, SARG TRYING LAY GROUNDWORK TO
INFLUENCE WHAT MANY HOPE WILL BE WATERSHED IN PALESTINIAN

AFFAIRS. JAN. 4 SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTED STATEMENT BY PNC CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM THAT PALESTINE CENTRAL COUNCIL WILL MEET IN DAMASCUS JAN. 11 TO CONSIDER PREPARATORY COMMITTEE REPORT RECOMMENDING EXPANSION OF PNC FROM 185 TO 300-350 MEMBERS. PREPARATORY COMMITTEE APPARENTLY MET DEC. 30 (76 DAMASCUS 8793), BUT RECEIVED NO LOCAL PUBLICITY. VOP DID, HOWEVER, REPORT PLO EXCOMM (WHICH FORMS CORE OF PREPARATORY COMMITTEE) MET DEC. 30.

3. LACK OF PUBLICITY PROBABLY SIGNALLED SYRIAN DISSATISFACTION WITH TREND IN PREPARATORY COMMITTEE TOWARD MORE RESTRICTED EXPANSION OF PNC THAN SARG AND FAHUM HAVE PRESSED FOR. RELIABLE SOURCE WHO MET WITH MEMBER OF PLO INFORMATION OFFICE JAN. 3 REPORTED JAN. 11 SESSION WILL DISCUSS EXPANSION OF PNC BY 80 MEMBERS, TO APPROXIMATELY 265. SOURCE REITERATED PNC WILL BE HELD AT CAIRO ARAB LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS. COMMENT: FEDAYEEN GROUPS THUS SEEM DETERMINED TO RESIST PRESSURES BEING EXERTED BY SARG, ESPECIALLY THROUGH FAHUM, TO DILUTE THEIR AUTHORITY WITHIN PLO BY INFUSION OF TOO MANY NEW MEMBERS.

4. LOCAL PALESTINIANS NOT ONLY WORRIED ABOUT SYRIAN PRESSURES BUT CONCERNED WITH RECENT STATEMENTS EMANATING FROM CAIRO. PLO INFO OFFICE SOURCE REPORTED THAT PRES. SADAT'S SUGGESTION THAT JORDAN AND FUTURE PALESTINIAN STATE BE LINKED WILL BE "TOPIC NUMBER ONE" UP FOR DISCUSSION AT JAN. 11 PCC MEETING. SOURCE VIGOROUSLY DENIED THRUST OF AL-AHRAM ARTICLE CLAIMING ABU MAYZAR HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN DISCUSSION WITH GOJ, AND CRITICIZED SYRIA FOR PUBLICIZING CONFIDENTIAL

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AL-AHRAM'S "MISINFORMATION" LOCALLY. LATER, ABU MAYZAR HIMSELF PUBLICLY ASSERTED HE VISITED AMMAN SOLELY TO ATTEND ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ON JERUSALEM, AND HAD RETURNED TO DAMASCUS IMMEDIATELY UPON CONCLUSION OF PROCEEDINGS WITHOUT HOLDING TALKS WITH JORDANIAN OFFICIALS. HE SPECIFICALLY DENIED TO FRENCH EMBOFF THAT PLO SEEKING RECONCILIATION WITH HUSSEIN. COMMENT: ABU MAYZAR WILL PRESUMABLY BE REQUESTED TO DELIVER ACCOUNT OF HIS MEETINGS IN AMMAN AT PCC SESSION. AL-AHRAM ALLEGATIONS AND PUBLICITY AFFORDED TO THEM BY SYRIAN MEDIA IMPLIES SYRIAN, AND POSSIBLY EGYPTIAN, SIGNAL TO PLO THAT SERIOUS EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH JORDAN IS EXPECTED.

5. WHILE SYRIA DID NOT PUBLICIZE SADAT'S COMMENTS IN WP ABOUT PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN LINKAGE (DAMASCUS 0019), LOCAL MEDIA GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO PROPOSAL BY KHALID AL-HASAN IN KUWAIT THAT SYRIA, EGYPT, JORDAN AND PLO ESTABLISH POLITICAL COMMAND. MEDIA ALSO NOTED HASAN'S COMMENT THAT IT UP TO PALESTINIANS TO DECIDE UPON DESIRABILITY OF CONFEDERATION WITH ANY STATE. COMMENT: ABSENCE OF

PUBLICITY ON SADAT STATEMENT CONTRASTED WITH PUBLICITY
GIVEN TO HASAN'S FAVORABLE COMMENTS ON QUADRIPARTITE
POLITICAL COMMAND SUGGESTS SYRIANS BELIEVE TALK OF CON-
FEDERATION STILL PREMATURE, AND IN ANY CASE SHOULD ORIGINATE
WITH PALESTINIAN RATHER THAN NON-PALESTINIAN SOURCES.
POLITICAL COORDINATION AMONG CONFRONTATION PARTIES IS
POSITIVE GOAL, HOWEVER, WHICH SARG DISPLAYS NO RELUCATANCE
TO PUBLICLY SUPPORT.

6. ON ISSUE OF PROVISIONAL PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT, MEDIA
HAVE NOT GIVEN ANY CLEAR INDICATION OF SARG'S STAND.
STATEMENT REPORTED BY AL-HASAN ASSERTED THAT IT POINTLESS TO
FORM PROVISIONAL GOVT. BEFORE PLO ASSURED INVITATION TO
GENEVA. OTHER STATEMENTS BY ABU MAYZAR AND ABU MAZIN (MAHMUD
ABBAS) LEFT MATTER FOR PNC TO DECIDE.

7. ON RELATED QUESTION OF JOINT ARAB DELEGATION, WHICH
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SYRIAN PRESIDENT HAS PUBLICLY SUPPORTED, FRENCH EMBOFF
WAS RECENTLY TOLD BY ABU MAYZAR THAT PLO HAD NO OBJECTION
TO GOING TO GENEVA AS PART OF A JOINT DELEGATION BUT IT
INSISTED ON RECEIVING INVITATION TO ATTEND IN NAME OF
PLO.

8. SARG HAS LENT ITS SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN EFFORTS TO
CONTROL REJECTION FRONT ELEMENTS. MEDIA HAVE BEEN MORE
PREOCCUPIED WITH FRONT'S PRINCIPAL BACKER, IRAQ, THAN
WITH PFLP AND ALF THEMSELVES. YET, SEVERAL VEILED
WARNINGS ISSUED IN PRESS SUGGEST SYRIAN PATIENCE WEARING
THIN. UNIDENTIFIED "PALESTINIAN SOURCES" CITED BY MEDIA
REPORTED THAT ASAD AT DECEMBER 26 MEETING WITH ARAFAT,
MUHSIN AND OTHERS OBSERVED HE PREFERRED PLO GUERILLA
ORGANIZATIONS TO POLICE CAMPS AND THAT SYRIA HAD NO
DESIRE TO ENTER CAMPS. YET, DOOR WAS CLEARLY LEFT OPEN
FOR SUCH AN EVENTUALITY IF PLO PROVED UNABLE OR UNWILLING
TO DO THE JOB ITSELF. LATER, A GREAT DEAL OF PROMINENCE
GIVEN TO STATEMENT BY KUWAIT PLO REP ALI YASSIN IN SUPPORT
OF PUTTING AN END TO REJECTION FRONT ACTIVITIES WITHIN
THE MOVEMENT.

9. COMMENT: OVERALL IMPRESSION PROJECTED LOCALLY IS ONE OF
FERMENT WITHIN PLO, WITH MEDIA ACCORDING PUBLICITY TO PLETHORA
OF MORE OR LESS MODERATE VIEWS. ABSENCE OF REFERENCE TO
ARAFAT PROBABLY REFLECTS CONTINUING SARG INTENTION TO
DOWNPLAY HIS LEADERSHIP ROLE. SARG BELIEVES PALESTINIANS
MUST DEVELOP THEIR STRATEGY IN COORDINATION WITH CONFRONTA-
TION STATES, PARTICULARLY SYRIA, AND IS APPARENTLY
WORKING FOR DILUTION OF FEDAYEEN STRENGTH AT UPCOMING PNC
SESSION WITH INTENT PRESUMABLY TO MAKE PNC MORE REPRESEN-

TATIVE AND PERHAPS MORE RESPONSIVE TO SYRIA. IN SARG
VIEW, PLO MUST NOT SHRINK FROM ADOPTING STRONG STAND
TOWARD REJECTION FRONT ELEMENTS THAT MAINTAIN POTENTIAL
TO DISRUPT JOINT ARAB PEACE STRATEGY. ON SOME ISSUES,
SUCH AS FORMATION OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, SARG CURRENTLY
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INTENDS TO KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN.
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